



**Michigan Association of Planning**  
A Chapter of the American Planning Association

September 21, 2016

Senator Tom Casperson  
Michigan State Senate  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

To the honorable Senator Casperson and the Senate Transportation Committee:

I am writing to express opposition to Senate Bill 953, which would amend the Highway Advertising Act. While we appreciate that the PA 110, the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, is no longer the statute being used to address the issue, the substitute solution still would make all land owned or leased by a school available for a billboard.

We remain seriously concerned that commercial activities that are not related to education purposes are allowed on school properties. Provisions in this bill will open the door to other exemptions such as for cell towers, and other commercial uses which would benefit the school but have serious impacts on quality of life in the communities where they are located.

This bill will effectively render school property used for a "public school purpose" as unzoned property and exempt from zoning when used by a private commercial interest. MAP has advocated for many years that schools should not only be subject to local zoning, but that school uses and their ancillary uses should be consistent with the municipal master plan as well. When looked at comprehensively, the positive and negative impacts of a school and its uses can be evaluated, and negative effects mitigated. As it stands now, municipalities have no control over school uses, and they should. A school has impacts that should be evaluated like any other large scale development, including impacts on water and sewer systems, traffic impacts, and the cost to the municipality to deliver public services to the school.

The Highway Advertising Act was intended to protect scenic beauty and viewsheds, and eliminate visual distractions for drivers. Provisions in this bill would undermine years of progress and would provide the signage industry with special protections not afforded to other uses and industries. There is no justification for such special treatment, and provisions of this substitute bill would further erode the ability of local government to establish policies that protect and enhance community character and vitality.

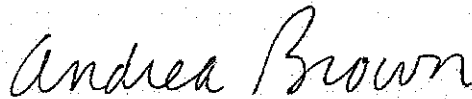
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The Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) is a 501 c 3 nonprofit membership organization which represents more than 4,000 professional planners, municipal elected officials and appointed planning commissioners and zoning board of appeal members. These are the local leaders who are charged with protecting the health, safety and welfare of a community through planning and zoning.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director, Michigan Association of Planning

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